

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION**

MID-PACIFIC REGION

**SOUTH-CENTRAL CALIFORNIA AREA OFFICE
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Execution of Two Warren Act Contracts to Westlands Water District and
Westlands Water District Distribution District 1 to Facilitate a Non-CVP Water
Transfer from Placer County Water Agency**

**Central Valley Project
Sacramento, California**

FONSI-08-91

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In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that the execution of two Warren Act (WA) contracts to facilitate a 20,000 acre foot transfer of non-CVP water from Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) to Westlands Water District (WWD) and Westlands Water District Distribution District 1 (WWDD1) is not a major Federal action that would appreciably affect the quality of the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by Reclamation's Environmental Assessment (EA) Number EA-08-91, *"Execution of Two Warren Act Contracts to Westlands Water District and Westlands Water District Distribution District 1 to Facilitate a Non-CVP Water Transfer from Placer County Water Agency,"* and is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

Temporary water transfers have been advocated as a critically important mechanism to distribute water throughout California. For example, in its August 28, 2000 Record of Decision (ROD) for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program (CALFED) Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report, water transfers were identified as a key component of a long-term comprehensive plan to restore the ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Bay-Delta) estuary system.

In recognition of the water shortage caused by general drought conditions and reduced Central Valley Project (CVP) deliveries to WWD and other agricultural districts within Fresno County, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors passed Resolution No. 08-253 on June 6, 2008. Resolution No. 08-253 declared a local state of emergency in Fresno County due to severe drought conditions, which had local water districts ration water supplies. On July 29, 2008, the Kings County Board of Supervisors also readopted a resolution declaring emergency drought conditions.

In response to the drought conditions and to move water to an area of high need, PCWA proposed a temporary water transfer of 20,000 acre-feet (AF) of its 2008 water supplies currently stored in its Middle Fork Project (MFP) reservoirs on the Rubicon and American Rivers to WWD for irrigation use within the WWD and WWDD1 service areas. To facilitate the transfer, the Reclamation proposes to execute two concurrent one-year WA contracts for a total of 20,000 acre feet of PCWA water to be stored and conveyed through Federal facilities.

FINDINGS

Water Supply and Hydrology: The Proposed Action would allow WWD and WWDD1 to utilize the transferred PCWA non-CVP water for meeting crop demands within WWD and WWDD1 and to alleviate current and future drought conditions. The Proposed

Action would not involve construction or modification of any facilities. Only existing facilities would be utilized to divert and store water. Export pumping from the pumping plants would not change during periods sensitive to Delta fisheries. There would be no anticipated decreases in water supply to CVP and PCWA customers. On the basis of a drought declaration by the State and the counties of Fresno and Kings, WWD and WWDD1 need additional water during the drought. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no effect on water supply and hydrology.

Surface Water Quality: Water quality would not be degraded as a result of the Proposed Action. Water transferred under the Proposed Action would not contribute to cumulative water quality effects. Short-term flows and storage changes in the Action Area's rivers and reservoirs may actually provide slightly better water quality by increasing the dilution of contaminants or would not change water quality at all. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no effect on surface water quality.

Hydropower: Water transferred under the Proposed Action would not contribute to hydropower effects. The water being pumped is non-CVP water and the associated pumping energy costs would be borne by WWD and WWDD1 using commercial energy provided by the existing power grid. As a consequence CVP Project Energy use would not increase. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no effect on hydropower generation and use.

Fisheries and Aquatic Resources: Under the Proposed Action Alternative, changes in river flows, reservoir storage, Delta inflows and export pumping in the Action Area during November and December 2008, would have no effect on listed salmonids, delta smelt, green sturgeon, and other fish and aquatic resources, including their critical habitat. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no effect on fisheries and aquatic resources.

Terrestrial and Riparian Resources: The Proposed Action would not change the availability or quality of any habitat for the terrestrial and riparian resources in the Action Area rivers and reservoirs, because river flows, reservoir storage, Delta inflows and export pumping would not be notably changed. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no effect on terrestrial and riparian resources.

Recreation: Under the Proposed Action, river flows, reservoir storage, Delta inflows and export pumping would not be notably changed. Therefore, recreational opportunities would not be affected.

Cultural Resources: The Proposed Action would not modify existing water conveyance facilities and would not include activities that would result in ground disturbance. Therefore, cultural resources would not be affected as a result of the Proposed Action.

Indian Trust Assets: The Proposed Action would not involve construction or modification of any facilities. Only existing facilities would be utilized to divert and redivert water. Land uses within the PCWA and WWD service areas would not change as a result of the transfer. The Proposed Action would not affect ITAs since the nearest ITA

to the Action Area is the Santa Rosa Rancheria, which is approximately six miles east of the Action Area. Therefore, ITAs would not be affected.

Environmental Justice: The Proposed Action would not have any negative effect on minority or low-income populations within the Action Area. The Proposed Action would have a beneficial effect because the low-income agricultural workers would benefit as an increased water supply would keep land from being fallowed and would allow them employment.

Land Use: Without the Proposed Action, agricultural land use would be affected by a lack of water supply. The Proposed Action would provide an additional water supply to agricultural lands in WWD and WWDD1. The water supply added (20,000 AF) is a small percentage of the total water supply required in WWD and WWDD1. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have a small beneficial effect on land use.

Socioeconomics: The transfer of 20,000 acre feet of water to WWD and WWDD1 would provide some relief to the area in current and future drought conditions, and would help sustain existing croplands in WWD and WWDD1. Businesses rely on these crops to maintain jobs. The Proposed Action would not induce population growth within WWD, nor would seasonal labor requirements change. Agriculturally dependent businesses would not be affected by the Proposed Action. No adverse effects to public health and safety would occur. The Proposed Action would not have highly controversial or uncertain environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks. The Proposed Action would continue to support the economic vitality in the region. WWD is responsible for managing water for the benefit of agriculture, since they exist to support growers within their districts. Maximizing the use of water transfers is beneficial to local economic conditions and agricultural employment. There would be a slight positive effect on localized socioeconomics due the support of sustained agricultural from the transferred water.